

Message Text

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44

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

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AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

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AFDROUGHT

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA AIRLIFT COMPLETED

REF: BAMAKO 3456

SUMMARY: MAURITANIA AIRLIFT (OPERATION KING GRAIN) COMPLETED OCTOBER 5 AFTER FIVE WEEKS OPERATIONS DURING WHICH TIME USAF DELIVERED 3032 TONS OF GRAIN AND 10 TONS OF DIESEL TO DROUGHT-STRICKEN EASTERN MAURITANIA. AIRLIFT THIS YEAR--DESPITE SPOTTY WEATHER CONDITIONS AND DETERIORATION NEMA RUNWAY--WAS EVEN SMOOTHER, FASTER OPERATION THAN LAST YEAR'S FINE EFFORT. MINHEALTH (GIRM DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR) HAS ASKED ME EXPRESS ON BEHALF GIRM HIS WARMEST THANKS TO USG AND USAF. WISH TO ADD MY PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS TO COLONELS FASSETT AND HARP AND TO ALL MEMBERS JTF. WELL DONE.

1. KING GRAIN 1974 AIRLIFT COMPLETED OCTOBER 5 WITH DELIVERY FINAL TONS GRAIN AND DIESEL FUEL TO NEMA. MINHEALTH ACCOMPANIED CHARGE AND AIDOFFS BAKER AND AMES TO NEMA FOR FINAL DAY AIRLIFT OPS. LOCAL GOVERNOR ARRANGED SUITABLE CEREMONY COMPLETE WITH HONOR GUARD, DRUMMERS, DANCERS AND BELLY-BUSTING MECHOU I IN HONOR OF JTF COMMANDER HARP AND MINHEALTH. AS REPORTED REFTEL, BAMAKO DCM KUNIHOLM AND 25 USAF PERSONNEL ALSO IN ATTENDANCE
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AS GUESTS OF GOVERNOR.

2. AIRLIFT THIS YEAR FAR SURPASSED LAST YEAR'S FINE EFFORT, THANKS IN LARGE PART TO ACCUMULATED EXPERIENCE. USAF LIFTED TOTAL 2952 MT GRAIN AND 10 MT DIESEL FUEL (FOR GIERM GRAIN DISTRIBUTION TRUCK FLEET) TO NEMA, AND 80 MT TO SECOND REGION CAPITAL AIOUN IN JUST OVER FIVE WEEKS OF OPERATIONS. FIRST REGION GOVERNOR COMMENTED THAT TOTAL TONNAGE DELIVERED BY AIRLIFT TO NEMA DURING SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER WAS MORE THAN DOUBLE THE TONNAGE HE HAD RECEIVED BY ROAD DURING FIRST EIGHT MONTHS 1974. BECAUSE NEMA REGION GRAIN RESERVES HAD PRACTICALLY RUN OUT BY LATE AUGUST AND POPULATION AT SEVERE RISK, GOVERNOR MADE EXTRA EFFORT ARRANGE QUICK, EFFICIENT AIRCRAFT OFF-LOADING AND SUBSEQUENT OVERLAND DISTRIBUTION BY TRUCK. WE ESTIMATE THAT 75 PERCENT OF THE GRAIN DELIVERED BY AIR HAS ALREADY REACHED ISOLATED INTERIOR DISTRIBUTION CENTERS. MINHEALTH AND GIRM AUDITOR ARE TOURING FIRST REGION THIS WEEK TO INSPECT GRAIN DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM. GOVERNOR SAYS AIRLIFTED GRAIN SHOULD CARRY POPULATION THROUGH REMAINDER 1974, DESPITE ONLY POOR TO FAIR HARVEST PROSPECTS IN FIRST REGION.

3. AIRLIFT OPS WERE SLOWED FOR A TIME BY BAD WEATHER AND BY INCREASING DETERIORATION OF NEMA RUNWAY, YET FINISHED SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. NEMA GOVERNOR ARRANGED FOR TEMPORARY RUNWAY REPAIRS KEEP EMERGENCY OPERATION GOING. IN FACT, FOR LAST TWO WEEKS OF AIRLIFT, LOCAL LABORERS WERE REPAIRING RUNWAY AFTER EACH SORTIE. AIR FORCE FLIGHT CREWS ALSO DESERVE CREDIT FOR LANDING ON NEMA'S POORLY-MAINTAINED, POSTAGE STAMP RUNWAY CARRYING MAXIMUM LOADS. AS REPEATEDLY NOTED BY NEMA GOVERNOR AND MINHEALTH, OTHER AIRLIFT DONORS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED EVEN CONSIDER OPERATIONS INTO FIRST REGION CLAIMING THAT NEMA RUNWAY UNSAFE FOR HEAVY AIRCRAFT.

4. MINEHALTH (GIRM DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR) HAS ASKED EMBASSY CONVEY TO USG AND USAF HIS WARMEST SENTIMENTS THANKS FOR THIS, AND SECOND EMERGENCY FOOD AIRLIFT OPERATION IN TWO SUCCESSIVE YEARS. TO THAT, WISH ADD MY OWN CONGRATULATIONS AND THANKS TO COLONELS HARP AND FASSETT, THEIR JTF CREW MEMBERS AND TO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO. IT WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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A REAL PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE TO WORK WITH YOU-ALL AGAIN THIS YEAR TO MEET PRESSING FOOD NEEDS IN EASTERN MAURITANIA. SHURTLEFF

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